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## Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose kingdom is above all earthly kingdoms, give our lawmakers this day clean hands and pure hearts to serve You for the glory of Your Name. Lord, equip them with grace, strength, and wisdom to face successfully the challenges that beset our Nation and world.

Infuse them with a creativity that will inspire them to do their work according to Your will, causing justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Lord, give them peace of soul when their thoughts and plans are right and disturb them when they drift from what is best. Lead them in paths of integrity, courage, and truth.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 17, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013—Motion to Proceed—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2872, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, H.R. 2872, a bill to amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 to allow the Secretary of the Interior to issue electronic stamps under such Act, and for other purposes.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the weekend, President Biden

once again refused to describe the situation at the southern border as a crisis. Apparently, according to the Commander in Chief, 10,000 illegal border crossings in a day—and the busiest month and year on record at the border—is, somehow, not a crisis.

Needless to say, I am glad that Senator LANKFORD and our colleagues working on meaningful border security policy don't share that view. I am glad that we may soon be able to address an urgent crisis with urgent action.

Negotiators are making headway toward the most significant border enhancements in almost 30 years. They are getting closer to delivering serious, lasting solutions to the unprecedented humanitarian and national security catastrophe that has unfolded on President Biden's watch. That is certainly good news.

Of course, our colleagues' work is also the linchpin of our broader efforts to address the national security challenges we face around the world, from Russian aggression in Europe to Iran-backed terror in Israel and the Middle East, to competition with China.

### CHINA

Mr. President, an increasingly aggressive China represents the greatest strategic challenge of the century, and recent events in the Indo-Pacific remind us exactly what is at stake. The PRC is an expansionist, revisionist, and repressive power all at the same time. It wants to impose its will on its neighbors, regardless of their views or values, just like it does at home.

Just consider the free, fair, and hotly contested elections that took place in Taiwan this past Saturday. The people of Taiwan have resisted Beijing's blatant efforts to interfere in their politics, and the PRC is clearly unhappy with the outcome of the election, which saw the DPP maintain its hold on the Presidency.

But it wasn't just the results of Taiwan's elections that the PRC views as a threat. It is also the basic process

• This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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itself. The idea of self-determination—of citizens actually getting a choice—terrifies the leaders in Beijing.

Of course, it is impossible to watch Taiwan's defiant self-expression without thinking how fragile this autonomy can be. Just remember how swiftly the PRC has acted to snuff out forces of democracy in Hong Kong.

Right now, my old friend Jimmy Lai, prolific publisher and a proud Hongkonger, is on trial. He is facing the possibility of life in prison simply for committing the crime of journalism, of seeking to publish the truth at variance with the party's definition of it.

See, the Chinese Communist Party doesn't just fear its own people. It fears the pursuit of truth. And, on both counts, Beijing finds common cause with fellow authoritarians in Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang. These regimes, and the would-be imperialists who lead them, understand that their most precious currency isn't truth or legitimacy, but control and fear.

The PRC subjects its citizens to extensive surveillance, censorship, and repression. And in the case of ethnic minorities like the Uighurs, Beijing has employed detention, sterilization, and outright genocide.

Beijing fears difference. It fears dissent, and not just at home. The PRC's interference in Taiwan's democracy is emblematic of the shadow of intimidation Beijing hopes to cast further across that region.

The PRC is building a military with the capacity to bend Beijing's neighbors to its will. It is putting U.S. allies like the Philippines directly in its crosshairs. It is aiming to impose direct, prohibitive cost on the United States, and it isn't pinching pennies to achieve those aims.

For more than two decades, its investments in new military equipment and capabilities have grown by an average of 10 percent per year. So it has become quite fashionable in Washington to talk about how we are not taking competition with China seriously enough.

But the resource this competition demands most urgently is not a stern lecture from a climate diplomat. What America and our allies need most in the race to outcompete our top strategic adversary and systemic rival is hard power.

At its essence, winning the competition means credibly deterring Beijing's worst impulses, which, for us, means investing in American strength. Outcompeting the PRC will require greater investment in our military capabilities and in our industrial capacity to produce them.

The West cannot be caught unprepared for this challenge. We cannot afford to neglect the lessons of history.

The Senate has opportunities ahead to demonstrate that we understand what is at stake. We will have chances to take hard power investments seriously. We need to be ready to take them.

#### ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Mr. President, now on a related matter, the Biden administration is continuing to wage war on the affordable and reliable American energy that makes America competitive. The administration's climate policy isn't just weakening American workers and businesses; it is actually making China's economy stronger.

President Biden's EPA recently issued new emissions standards that, as several of my Republican colleagues pointed out last year, "are so stringent they effectively mandate automakers to produce electric vehicles, even if Americans do not want them."

The move is shockingly out of step with the needs of American consumers, the capacity of American industry, and our Nation's strategic interest. The whimsical desire for universal electric vehicles caters to the preferences of wealthy coastal liberals, but working families simply aren't buying it. The average EV on the market costs over \$16,000 more than the average gas-powered car. As one automaker recently put it, the Biden administration has been "far too focused on . . . the well-heeled one-to-two percenters . . . forgetting about the people where a car is not a luxury—it's a necessity."

Sure enough, a \$16,000 premium is more than most sensible Americans are willing to pay. Electric vehicles account for less than 8 percent of new vehicle sales in the United States. Less than 8 percent of Americans shopping for a new car are buying an EV. That, however, hasn't stopped the Biden administration from powering ahead for an absurd goal for electric vehicles to make up two-thirds of the car sales by 2032.

American businesses are not buying this nonsense either. In fact, auto dealers in Kentucky and across the Nation recently sounded alarm bells in a letter to the President. Here is what they said:

This attempted electric vehicle mandate is unrealistic based on current and forecasted customer demand. Already, electric vehicles are stacking up on our lots.

And just earlier this month, Hertz announced plans to sell off a third of its electric vehicle rental fleet due to sparse demand and heavy repair costs.

Meanwhile, State utilities are becoming concerned that a massive uptick of EV use could overload power grids that are already on the edge of blackouts.

Talk about a lose-lose proposition. But there is one party that stands to benefit from Washington Democrats' climate scheme, and that is the Chinese Communist Party. As I mentioned before, China controls nearly 70 percent of the supply chain for the batteries required to manufacture EVs. A Chinese automaker just became the world's top seller of electric cars.

And thanks to Washington Democrats' so-called Inflation Reduction Act, leased cars from China qualify for a major tax credit. This means hard-

working Americans like the Kentuckians I represent are directly subsidizing California millionaires and the CCP all at the same time.

So it is one thing for the Biden administration's outgoing climate czar to spend his time begging China to voluntarily engage in unenforceable green diplomacy, but it is quite another for Washington Democrats to forcibly create a pipeline that pumps working Americans' tax dollars into the pockets of our biggest strategic adversary.

It is time for President Biden to choose between the American people and a leftwing dream that communist China can't wait for us to realize.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

#### CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, last night the Senate took an important step toward passing a temporary extension of government funding and avoiding an unnecessary government shutdown. We had a strong bipartisan vote last night with 68 Members in favor of moving forward with the CR, and that number would have been higher were it not for weather delays. It is a clear signal that majorities of both parties in the Senate want to pass this funding extension as quickly as we can.

If both sides continue working in good faith, we can have the CR passed by tomorrow. If both sides continue working in good faith, we can avoid a shutdown without last minute drama or needless anxiety for so many Americans.

There is every reason in the world to make this an easy, uncomplicated, and drama-free process. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do just that, work in good faith. We are willing to cooperate, as always, with the other side to keep this process moving, but Republican Members need to be realistic and practical about how much time we have left before the shutdown deadline.

What the Senate cannot do right now is mimic the chaos in the House, where a vocal minority of hard-right rabble-rousers want to bully their way into making a shutdown happen. Amazingly, the hard right thinks preventing a shutdown is somehow a "surrender," as the House Freedom Caucus suggested a few days ago.

Only in the bizarre world of the hard right is it a surrender to keep the government open. Only in the twisted logic of MAGA extremism is it a disaster to extend funding so that VA offices remain open, food inspectors remain on the job, nutrition funding remains in place. All of these programs

would be at risk if the government shuts down on Friday. But to the hard right, a shutdown is precisely the point. They want to create pain and chaos for the American people in order to bully their way into getting what they want.

But by now, many Republicans—even in the House—are exhausted by the hard right's bully tactics. The Republican majority can't get anything done over in the House because the hard right keeps sabotaging things on the floor—even their own appropriations bills. The hard right and the House Republican leadership's all-too-often willingness to go along with them is perhaps the biggest reason why this Republican majority is one of the least impressive, least productive, and least competent in modern history.

But for all their bullying and bluster, all their attempts at intimidation, the hard right's efforts are going to end in failure. If the majority of Senators and Representatives continue working in good faith—Democrat and Republican—we are going to keep the government open. We are going to continue on the appropriations process.

So I urge my colleagues, once again, let's work together. Let's work together to pass a CR quickly so we avoid a shutdown with time to spare.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. President, now on the supplemental, today I will join with congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle in both Houses to meet at the White House with President Biden and discuss the importance of passing the national security supplemental.

I expect the meeting with President Biden will reinforce something I have been saying all along: It is a matter of the highest national urgency that both parties keep working together to pass the supplemental. The vast majority of Members on both sides know we must do something on Ukraine. The eyes of history are upon this Chamber. We made a lot of good progress over the past 2 weeks, and I remain hopeful that things are headed in the right direction.

Reaching an agreement on the supplemental, of course, is very complex. Republicans have demanded that border provisions be included in exchange for Ukraine. Everyone knew that was never going to be easy.

Nevertheless, President Biden has made clear that he is willing to work with Republicans on border security. But as everyone knows, including Republican leadership, this has to be bipartisan.

The hard right—typical of them in the House—have insisted on passing a highly partisan bill, H.R. 2, word for word. That is not bipartisanship. Any agreement on an issue as complex and contentious as the border is going to have to have support from both sides of the aisle.

The work is not done on the supplemental, but I remain very hopeful that negotiations continue heading in the right direction.

Democrats are trying very hard to keep this process going, and I want to acknowledge the efforts of my Senate colleagues who have been at this for weeks. Passing the supplemental is one of the hardest things that the Senate has done in a very long time, but we must do everything in our power to finish the job. At stake is the security of our country, the survival of our friends in Ukraine, the safety of our friends in Israel, and nothing less—nothing less—than the future of Western democracy.

We cannot come up short in this pivotal moment. We must stay the course until the job is done.

#### BIPARTISAN TAX AGREEMENT

Mr. President, on the bipartisan tax agreement, yesterday Senate Finance Chairman WYDEN and House Ways and Means Chair SMITH announced a bipartisan, bicameral tax agreement with important wins for working families and for Main Street businesses. I am proud to support this bipartisan tax agreement because it will provide much needed relief for low-income families and keep American businesses competitive against the Chinese Communist Party.

The child tax credit alone will benefit as many as 60 million children in low-income households and lift nearly half a million kids out of poverty—half a million kids out of poverty. That is a really significant achievement, and it is a credit to Chairman WYDEN and all the negotiators.

Now, most Democrats, myself certainly included, wanted to restore full refundability to the child tax credit. This framework does go a good part of the way toward restoring full refundability. The best part is the biggest tax credits under this expanded CTC will go to low-income families, helping them afford basic necessities like groceries, diapers, baby formula, clothing, toiletries, and so much more.

Second, I am really happy that this framework expands the low-income tax credit or LIHTC. I made it clear to the negotiators from the beginning that any agreement must include provisions to support affordable housing or I couldn't support it.

I want to thank Senator CANTWELL for all the work she did to make sure that strong affordable housing provisions were included in the bill. She is a very influential member of the Finance Committee, and she and I have worked on low-income tax credit issues for a while.

Right now, housing is one of the biggest problems in our country. States like mine and yours, Mr. President, particularly, struggle with increasing the supply for affordable loans. The housing shortage affects everyone everywhere—urban, suburban, and rural areas. Thankfully, this tax package will support the construction of up to 200,000 new affordable homes by bolstering LIHTC allocations and providing greater financing flexibility for affordable housing construction.

In an era of divided government, when you have a House Republican ma-

jority constantly trying to put housing funding on the chopping block, the LIHTC is the best tool available to increase the supply of affordable housing. So I am proud of the expansion we secured in the agreement.

Of course, like everything nowadays, moving forward with this agreement will take continued cooperation from both sides in both Chambers. I hope my Republican colleagues will work with us in good faith because this could improve the lives of millions of working families and help Main Street businesses grow in today's economy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. DURBIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 3597 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, over the weekend, a reporter asked President Biden if the situation at our southern border is a crisis.

"No," the President said. "No."

Well, I would express surprise, but, unfortunately, failing to recognize crises is pretty much par for the course for President Biden—see also his inflation crisis or his withdrawal from Afghanistan.

But the President's answer is still notable for the complete disconnection it shows from the reality at our southern border, and it demonstrates why it has become absolutely necessary for Congress to step in; because the situation at our southern border is, in fact, a crisis—a logistical crisis, a humanitarian crisis, and a national security crisis.

For the President's edification, I will just run through the numbers. We have had three recordbreaking years of illegal immigration at our southern border on President Biden's watch. Fiscal year 2021 saw a recordbreaking 1,734,686 migrant encounters at our southern border. Then fiscal year 2022 broke that record, and then fiscal year 2023 broke the 2022 record. If fiscal year 2024 continues on its current trajectory, we will end up breaking the record yet again.

December reportedly saw a staggering 302,000 migrant encounters at our southern border—the highest monthly number ever recorded—and I cannot emphasize enough just how large of a number that is. As my colleague from Pennsylvania said of September's border number, it is like having the city of Pittsburgh show up at the border in just 1 month.

American cities—blue cities now as well as border cities—are staggering under the influx of migrants. Major cities like Chicago and New York are running up big bills and have begged for more Federal money, and that is just to deal with a fraction of the number of migrants we saw cross the border in December alone.

But more than a logistical crisis—and, of course, a humanitarian crisis since migrants are exposed to significant dangers on their journeys to the border—this is a national security crisis. Our country cannot be secure while we have hundreds of thousands of individuals illegally flooding across our southern border every single month. The volume alone smooths the way for terrorists, criminals, and other dangerous individuals to enter our country—and there are dangerous individuals trying to enter our country.

In the first 2 months of fiscal year 2024, 30 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist were apprehended attempting to cross our southern border; in other words, roughly, one every other day. Fiscal year 2023 saw 169 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist apprehended at our southern border—a sharp increase over fiscal year 2022, which was itself a sharp increase over fiscal year 2021. That is a dangerous trajectory.

Of course, these numbers only refer to individuals the Border Patrol actually apprehended. Since October 1 alone, there have been more than 83,000 known “got-aways.” Those are individuals the Border Patrol saw but was unable to apprehend. And there is no telling how many unknown “got-aways” there have been over that same period. How many of those individuals were terrorists, criminals, or other dangerous individuals?

Well, the fact of the matter is, we have no way of knowing. What we do know is that dangerous people are trying to make their way into our country across our southern border, and there is no question that the chaos at our southern border is smoothing the way for them.

President Biden bears a lot of responsibility for the 3 years of chaos we have seen at our southern border. From the day that he took office, when he rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border, President Biden made it clear that border security was at the bottom of his priority list. And over the 3 years since, he has turned our southern border into a magnet for illegal migration—from repealing the border policies of his predecessor to misusing our

asylum and parole systems, which are now providing temporary amnesty to hundreds of thousands of individuals who are here illegally.

As his answer to the reporter over the weekend once again made clear, he still does not understand the magnitude of the resulting crisis. In fact, he doesn't understand that it is a crisis at all.

So it is time for Congress to step in. After months of delay, Democrats have finally come to the table, and I am encouraged by the ongoing talks. I am hopeful that, in the coming days, we will see final agreement on real border security legislation—not cosmetic fixes or superficial tweaks but real reforms that will allow us to stem the flow at our southern border.

Senator LANKFORD deserves a ton of credit for staying at the negotiating table to hammer home the reality of the situation to Democrats and to craft long-term changes to our border policies that will decrease the flow to the border and remove individuals already within the country. I have to say, I am grateful for his hard work.

Three years of chaos is long enough. We owe it—we owe it—to the American people to get this crisis under control today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I and Senator BROWN, the Senator from Ohio, be allowed to finish our remarks before the planned recess.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, for the third time—third time—since late September, Congress is rushing to avert a government shutdown.

We have an annual appropriations process for the fiscal year, which ends at the end of September each year. But, for some reason, we find ourselves in a position where, frankly, we reflect embarrassingly the dysfunction here in Washington, DC, because of the way we deal with keeping the lights on and keeping the government up and running.

The Senate and the House both have failed to send a single regular appropriations bill to the President's desk. Just before the start of this fiscal year, we passed a stopgap bill to fund the government through mid-November. When that deadline rolled around, we punted again and set two separate deadlines. The first is this Friday, and the second is just 2 weeks after that.

Today, Congress is on track to kick the can down the road once again. The Senate is preparing to vote on a continuing resolution that will push these deadlines even further. The first will arrive on March 1, and the second will come on March 8. We can only wonder what is going to happen between now and March 1 and March 8 that will prevent us from another can kicked down the road.

None of this is inevitable. This is a result of planned dysfunction. It is embarrassing to find ourselves in this situation once again. This is not complicated. It is not physics. We are talking about the most basic duty of funding the government for a full year. This is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of Congress, but obviously it is not a priority for the majority leader, whose job it is to schedule votes in the Senate. In other words, none of us—not the Presiding Officer, not me, none of the 99 Senators—other than the majority leader can actually schedule something for a vote on the floor.

I know I must sound a little bit like a broken record, but it is important for everybody to remember that this roller coaster of last-minute stopgap funding bills is not inevitable. Congress has all year to plan and prepare for the end of the fiscal year. It is not a deadline that comes out of nowhere; it arrives like clockwork on September 30.

Despite the long runway, the Senate has failed to pass a single funding bill before the deadline. That wasn't because the individual bills were not available, it wasn't because they were divisive or ultrapartisan, and it certainly wasn't because of lack of time. The Senate Appropriations Committee passed all 12 regular appropriations bills in June and July—last June and last July. Each bill passed the committee with strong bipartisan support, and more than half of them passed unanimously. I think that would shock a lot of people who think Congress is polarized and irretrievably broken, that actually the Appropriations Committee could pass bipartisan appropriations bills and more than half of them unanimously.

So what is the deal? Well, the deal is the majority leader could have put the bills on the floor immediately. We could have been voting on funding bills last June. Instead, days, weeks, and months crept by without even an inch of progress. It was mid-September before Senator SCHUMER even attempted to put the first appropriations bill on the floor. We are now 3½ months into the fiscal year, and none of the 12 appropriations bills have been signed into law—not one.

Congress has developed a dangerous, dangerous habit of circumventing the normal processes for funding the government, and it is not without cost or consequences. It has been common to blow through the deadlines and rely on short-term funding bills to keep the lights on. I know of no business, large

or small, in the United States that could operate like this because you can't plan. All of your time is absorbed and energy absorbed in these efforts to keep the government from shutting down, and all of it is avoidable.

Now, there is no doubt that stopgap bills are better than government shutdowns, but it is not a good solution, especially for critical missions like national defense.

Here is the price the Nation pays for the failure to do our business on time. Short-term funding bills do avoid the most immediate consequences of a shutdown. They ensure that our troops are paid on time and that short-term operations can continue. But they have a decidedly negative impact on a full range of long-term projects, from recruitment to modernization.

During a continuing resolution, the Department of Defense can't even start some of the programs we authorized in the National Defense Authorization Act, which we passed in December. Our Nation's top military leaders have repeatedly emphasized the importance of full-year government funding bills. They have told us over and over again that reliable funding is a key to planning and preparing for the future.

I remember maybe about a year ago now having lunch—a bipartisan group of Senators—in the Senate Dining Room with Secretary Bob Gates.

Secretary Gates, a former Secretary of Defense, served, I want to say, under eight Presidents, and he is wise in the ways of Washington, DC, although he hadn't been back to Capitol Hill for some time before we had lunch.

I asked him for his suggestions and recommendations for how we can ensure the safety and security of the United States by making sure that our military was second to none and making sure that we maintain maximum deterrence so that wars wouldn't break out because people experienced or sensed a lack of will or preparation. He said the single most important thing—piece of advice he could give us is no more continuing resolutions. No more continuing resolutions—the single most important thing. What we have been doing time and time and time again is continuing resolutions—exactly the wrong thing when it comes to our national security and our standing in the world and our ability to deter aggressors in a very, very dangerous environment.

In short, timely, full-year appropriations support our long-term goals. You can't plan for a few weeks at a time. Long, full-year appropriations bills support our troops, boost our military readiness, restore credible deterrence, and maintain our ability to compete with our most formidable adversaries.

By continuing to move from one stopgap bill to another, we are shooting ourselves in the foot. We are weakening our own defense as China's military strength continues to grow and as we see more and more aggression on the part of Iran in the Middle East

through various proxies like Hamas. We see Kim Jong Un in North Korea say he wants nothing to do with South Korea and has basically declared a state of war against South Korea. In Asia proper, China continues to threaten to attack Taiwan, creating a potentially catastrophic set of circumstances.

We need credible deterrence, and that credible deterrence comes with a first-class military, second to none, and an understanding that America is absolutely committed first and foremost to our national security.

Given the threats we face in the world today, from the Middle East to Europe and the Indo-Pacific, it is absolutely critical that Congress take defense funding seriously. It cannot be the last item on our to-do list; it should be priority No. 1. There are a lot of things Congress does that are not priorities, but national defense is our No. 1 priority—should be. Reliable funding for our defense is vital to our security. It should come before votes on nominees and virtually every other task on the Senate's agenda.

Well, watching this play out once again is like watching another bad movie. The characters miss the obvious warning signs, make bad decisions, and repeatedly stumble into danger. Throughout this movie, you can't help but think that no one is foolish enough to land in this situation or certainly to do so voluntarily, but, sadly, that is how I feel, looking at the majority leader's decisionmaking when it comes to funding the government and particularly national security.

At the end of September, Congress kicked the can to November. In November, we punted to January and February. Now Congress is on track to push the deadline once again, teeing us up for another fiscal cliff—actually, not just one but two of them—in March.

With each stopgap bill, we are sending the message that we are really not serious about our national security because we are weakening our defense, crippling our readiness, and hurting our long-term security.

Here in the Senate, the stakes are much higher than in this bad movie. We don't have the freedom to make poor decisions just to put on a show. So the bottom line is this: Congress has a duty to pass full-year, on-time appropriations bills. This is the absolute bare minimum when it comes to governing. It is time to get serious about debating, amending, and passing those regular appropriations bills.

I don't know what it is going to take to convince the majority leader that this is important, which is the reason I keep coming to the floor and talking about it. Hopefully somebody, somewhere, will be paying attention.

Congress failed to get the job done before the first deadline. We failed to get it done before the second deadline. We failed to get it done before the third deadline. We simply cannot, in good

conscience, delay this process any further. There is far too much at stake.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING PAM ROSADO

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this is not the speech I really ever wanted to give. I appreciate being recognized to give it.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Pam Rosado, a longtime member of my staff, dedicated public servant, and advocate, whom we lost last week.

I have known Pam from the community in her work as an advocate for unions and for social service agencies, and especially for people individually. And then she joined our office more than 4 years ago. I will get to that.

She embodied the true meaning of service. She spent her life fighting for others. She understood and supported the whole idea of dignity of work. She bettered our State. She bettered our country. She touched so many lives along the way.

She joined our staff in the beginning of 2019—almost 5 years ago—as a constituent advocate on our casework team.

We don't think about it enough around here, but the foundation of our work in these jobs—the foundation of our work—is individual service to individual people. We look at, you know, taxes and Medicare and Social Security and foreign policy and Ukraine. All of those things obviously are important. It is what we are elected to do. But, fundamentally, these jobs are about helping individual people when they have an issue—whether it is Social Security, whether it is Medicare, whether it is a passport, whether it is a tragedy in somebody's life—and we cut through redtape and do that.

Nobody, nobody represented that service—and I have a lot of people in my office who represent that service, and a lot of people, on their first day, they understand the importance of individual service. We just interviewed someone who joined our staff this week. I interviewed her several weeks ago, and what made me want to hire her is she said the most important thing in these jobs is helping people one at a time, individually. We forget that in this job far too often.

Pam joined our office about 5 years ago. Not long afterward, we were taking on a record caseload as Ohioans dealt with the effects of the pandemic. Too many workers were reaching out. So many people were reaching out to our office for assistance. The world was an uncertain place.

Pam was a rock for Ohioans. She was a rock for other staff persons because she had already had a life of service and, especially, was a mentor to young people in the office. And she was a source of hope. She made things happen.

We have calculated this. She worked on 1,331 cases in those 5 years. She was a relentless advocate, known for quick responses in care and handling. And for every case, she provided a space for Ohioans to be heard and showed unwavering kindness.

In letters people sent us and descriptions people gave of Pam during the time and since her death, the word “kindness” comes back over and over and over again. Humility is the foundation of virtue, and I would say kindness is too. And Pam understood that. She didn’t bring that to our office; she had lived her life that way.

Ohioans were lucky to have Pam on their side. We were lucky to have her on our team. For some Ohioans, she resolved disputes with the Veterans Administration or the U.S. Postal Service. For others, she helped secure a federally compliant driver’s license. One Ohioan shared that, because of Pam, he was able to return to his union job as a driver for UPS. And those jobs, because they have an effective union—something Pam understood—those jobs have good pay, good benefits, good retirement—again, because of an effective union at the bargaining table. Pam understood all of that, but this was a gentleman who needed a little bit of help to return to that job.

In the numerous notes she received, they thanked her for her dedication and determination in seeing her cases through. They wrote in for different reasons. Every letter shared heartfelt gratitude and warm wishes. In reading those letters, it is clear the impact that Pam had. Again, “kindness”—we heard that word over and over.

“After receiving help from Pam,” one Ohioan wrote in—I mean, people, after they get help, most of them don’t think about writing in because we are the government, even though we are individual people in the government, and the caseworkers are doing what they do. But people don’t think to write in. But an unusually high, an inordinate number of people wrote in to thank Pam Rosado.

This one Ohioan wrote:

There is tremendous value in being able to speak with a kind and understanding person after hours on the internet.

Then he wrote:

You are exceptional, Ms. Rosado.

My staff and I couldn’t agree more. She was exceptional. She cared deeply for the people in her life, strangers whom she met through our office—or never met, only online or on the phone or a few coming in. But she cared deeply for the people in her life.

She was closest to her family, her friends, her colleagues, and, of course, every Ohioan who reached out. And action always accompanied that care.

She wanted to help everyone have a better day, a better life. That makes a difference for so many Ohioans and so many of our colleagues.

To my staff—to the person, I believe—Pam was more than a coworker. She was a friend. She believed in her colleagues. She lifted them up. She knew our job was to help people individually, including coworkers.

Her joy, her spirit were infectious. She lit up every room she walked into. This past November, in a meeting that we did with all members of the staff, she greeted everyone with excitement as she reconnected with colleagues.

We have offices all over the State: Cleveland and Columbus and Cincinnati and Lorain. So they don’t all see each other all the time.

And she met new members of our team. Whenever a staffwide email went out announcing a departure or a new hire—we have had members, people on our staff—it seems to be happening a good bit—who are called up to serve in the military or they are National Guard people, or whenever somebody leaves for a better job or retires or whatever it is, she was the first to respond with heartfelt congratulations, words of encouragement, and—several people told me—a smiley face emoji. She made every member of this office feel appreciated and welcomed, and that warmth touched each of us.

In the Cleveland office where she worked, her laugh filled the halls as she spoke with constituents and colleagues. When you heard her, you couldn’t help but smile and laugh too. She made a difference for every member of our staff and for so many Ohioans. Our office is a better place because of Pam. Ohio is better because of her.

It wasn’t just in our office. Throughout Pam’s entire life, she served others and fought for others.

She served the community in a number of ways. She served on nonprofit boards. She was an active member of her church and community, and she was a mentor to aspiring advocates and policymakers.

Before joining our office—and this was the first time, I believe, years ago; I believe it was the first time I met Pam—she was the political director of the Service Employees International Union, a union that typically represents people who are not the highest income workers. They are people who, because they have a union, make a living wage and have the kind of benefits that unions bring. She was their political director.

She advocated for the United Labor Agency. She organized and taught classes to future union leaders about the history of the labor movement. Something, my God—I know that some people in this body don’t think we should teach history, and many don’t even think of the history of the labor movement. She understood that if you know the history of the labor movement, you know the history of the middle class, you know the history of the

dignity of work. She taught about the fight for good jobs, good benefits, and what their union card means.

She dedicated a decade of her career to leading outreach for Policy Matters Ohio. She made sure their efforts were grounded in what workers needed and reached as many Ohioans as possible.

Her colleagues at Policy Matters recognize Pam’s integral role in making the think tank and the labor movement what they are today. They recall Pam’s ability to make things happen, whether it was planning a last-minute event or helping to secure an Ohioan’s deserved interim benefits.

That ability made her an indispensable member of our team. Frankly, it made her an indispensable member of any team that she interacted with or was a part of.

Her legacy will be upheld by her friends, her family, and every member of our staff. We honor her memory. We grieve for her mother and her family. We will honor it by continuing her public service, her activism, her advocacy, and the work we believe in and she believed in, as we fight for Ohioans with her tenacity and dedication.

Today, our thoughts are with Pam’s family, her friends, those who knew and loved Pam, my staff, all who had the privilege of working alongside her, and all who had the privilege of benefiting from her work. And that was a huge number of people in a State of 12 million.

This office will be forever grateful for our time with Pam. We will miss her every day. I am grateful for my years of time with Pam, on and off, in her different roles, and we were thrilled to have her as a member of our staff.

May she rest in peace.

#### RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:47 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

#### AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Missouri.

#### CHAMPIONS OF MISSOURI

Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise to bring this body’s attention to 13 extraordinary Missourians who truly embody the best that our great State has to offer. They represent the inaugural class of my office’s new Champions of Missouri Program, which seeks to identify and honor Missourians who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, selflessly served their community, and achieved great things.

These 13 honorees span the State of Missouri—including St. Louis, Hermann, Kansas City, Wentzville, Sedalia, Springfield, Fulton, Memphis, Fredericktown, and the bootheel.